

Episode 3 with Charlotte Østergaard

Bouncing with my value system

Introduction

My third guest is my colleague Charlotte Østergaard, a designer and a costume maker based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Charlotte has expanded the notion of costumes with her experiments and research into the agency of materialities and costumes. During more than thirty years of crafting textiles and costumes she has collaborated with numerous performing artists in dance and theatre, as well as with activists, and she even ran her own fashion house in central Copenhagen with her own design. It is a pleasure to have her as a guest to talk through her playful practice that connects people and materialities, often with laughter and always with love.

Summary

Charlotte's connecting costumes are a very vivid example of performative encounters. She describes how her connecting costumes are a vehicle for engagement with the other. She describes an encounter where you both connect *with* and connect *through* certain materialities or entities. Charlotte also talks about negotiations in the encounter and questions who is affecting whom and what is performing on what. It relates to Maaïke Bleeker's understanding of performative encounters as something reciprocal; that it not only involves one transmitting something to another but rather something that happens in between agents, an exchange. In Charlotte's work you will find multiple unforeseen encounters with different forces like the wind, and other accidental participants, and she describes how the participants blend in with the environment and become objects or living sculptures. These experiences seem both performative and instantly transformative in how they create multiple bonds and force the participants to adapt to the surroundings.

An interesting thing Charlotte mentions is how the costume queers her appearance and changes how the passers-by would see her. Here she changed the grammar of the space she travelled through as Gigi Argyropoulou does in her practice. By doing that she creates a space that is unpredictable, open, and potentially vulnerable which are the preconditions for change. Gigi asked how transformative encounters intervene with the everyday and it seems like a part of the answer is to be found in Charlottes work in the way the work queers the spaces it travels through in the city landscape or wherever it may go.

We also had a long chat about being a guest in participatory performances and how we both longed for our own space within the work. We talked about negative experiences, like feeling that you have to perform in a certain way or are being held accountable for the work. The lack of safety and becoming co-dependent with a dysfunctional setup makes you question the responsibility of the participant and what she has agreed to.

Charlotte mentioned the work *Pleased to Meet You*, a Performative Encounter with the More-than-Human, the last work in my project, and described it as a project that bounced with her value system. A performative encounter with a flock of hungry birds at a square in the city made her question the human significance in the world order and made her feel small, insignificant, and helpless compared to the birds, a feeling that may or may not lead to transformation. With this affirmative acknowledgement about my research, I will finish this episode of Transformative Encounters.